

Point of Rocks Stage Station - Stable
22 miles northeast of Rock Springs, 1/2 mile
south of Interstate 80
Point of Rocks Vicinity
Sweetwater County
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-69a

HABS
WYO,
19-PTROC.V,
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

POINT OF ROCKS STAGE STATION - STABLE

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Location: 22 miles northeast of Rock Springs, 1/2 mile south of Interstate 80, near Point of Rocks, Sweetwater County, Wyoming.
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS Point of Rocks Quadrangle Map) 12.683890.4615980.

Present Owner: The State of Wyoming, administered by the Wyoming Recreation Commission.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Historic site.

Statement of Significance: The Point of Rocks Stage Station is one of the few remains of the celebrated Overland Stage Route. Operated by Ben Holladay, the Overland Stage Company contributed to the settlement and development of the West. Point of Rocks was an important junction for the Overland Stage and later the Union Pacific Railroad and the South Pass Stage Line, which served the Sweetwater Mines. This stable provided fresh horses and repairs for stages passing along the Overland Stage trail.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1861-2 (Trevor, p. 97).
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a complete chain of title to the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 27, Township 20 North, Range 101 West, describing the land upon which the buildings are located, taken from the records of the clerk of the County Courthouse, Green River, Wyoming:

1899 Deed May 19, 1899
Recorded April 20, 1899
Book L, Page 447
S. E. Day, et al
to
The Union Pacific Railroad

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- 1902 Patent December 20, 1908
 Recorded March 10, 1902
 Book A, Page 138
 The United States of America
 to
 The Union Pacific Railroad
- 1947 Quit Claim Deed February 5, 1947
 Recorded February 13, 1947
 Book 148, page 271
 The Union Pacific Railroad
 to
 The State of Wyoming

4. Original plans and construction, alterations: There is little documentary or photographic evidence on this stage station. The stable is in ruinous condition; it is therefore impossible to ascertain what the original plans were and what, if any, alterations were made to it.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Point of Rocks Stage Station was built about 1861 or 1862 as a southern stop on the Overland Stage Line. Accessibility to springs made the site a traditional watering place for Indians and hunters.

During the early years of the Civil War the Federal Government allowed military strength in the West to decline to such an extent that transportation routes and communications lines were in constant jeopardy from Indian raids. Stages carrying the United States mail along the Oregon and California trails were completely interdicted by Indian depredations. Ben Holladay, proprietor of the Overland Stage Line which carried the mails, appealed to the Federal Government for help and decided to move the hardest hit section of the route south to avoid further disruptions. Among the stations constructed along the new southern route was the station at Point of Rocks. This station was 1,000 miles west of Atchison, Kansas and 904 miles east of Placerville, California, the two terminals of the Overland Stage operation.

Throughout the Civil War years the region around Point of Rocks continued to be the scene of considerable Indian activity. Point of Rocks station was burned out at least once. According to one account, the station was also the scene of a robbery staged by a "Jim Slade, ex-stage line superintendent, turned bandit." Seven

passengers on the coach were reportedly killed in the holdup.

In 1868 the Union Pacific Railroad was built through the area and Point of Rocks became a junction between the Overland Trail and the railroad. During the same year, 1868, gold was discovered in the vicinity of South Pass. For several years following this discovery Point of Rocks Stage Station was the starting terminal for the stage and freight operations serving South Pass City (WYO-27) and the Sweetwater Mines. In 1870 there were two daily runs between Point of Rocks and the mines at South Pass City and Atlantic City (WYO-60). The trip took under fifteen hours and was considered to be a good deal more comfortable and convenient than the desert trip on the Union Pacific Railroad.

By 1877 the Sweetwater mines were no longer producing enough to make stage and freight operations profitable. The station buildings at Point of Rocks then became the residence of the Taggart family. Mrs. Taggart turned part of the structure into a school room and held classes there for the children of the small town just across the railroad tracks. The Taggarts' daughter, Mrs. Charles Rador, lived here with her husband, a sheep rancher, until 1910. According to local legend, Butch Cassidy sought the protection of the Rador's station following the Tipton Train Robbery.

The last resident of the station was Jim McKee, thought to be a member of the "Hole in the Wall" gang. McKee spent much of his time searching the area for a cache of loot reportedly buried by Cassidy some years earlier. The Union Pacific attempted to evict McKee during the 1930s, but he threatened their representative with bodily harm and the company decided to leave him alone. Thereafter McKee kept a smallpox warning on his door to discourage visitors.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

_____, "Point of Rocks," research folder in the files of the Wyoming Recreation Commission, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

_____, United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, Antiquities Site Inventory, Rock Springs District, Site number HS49-04-3, Point of Rocks Stage Station.

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Lund, John, Point of Rocks Stage Station Preservation, Plan I, Prepared for the Wyoming Recreation Commission, June, 1971, available at the Wyoming Recreation Commission, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Wyoming Recreation Commission. National Register Nomination, accepted January 5, 1970.

b. Secondary and published sources:

_____, Annals of Wyoming, The Official Publication of the Wyoming State Historical Society, "Overland Stage Trail-Trek Number 2," vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 194-214.

_____, Annals of Wyoming, "Overland Stage Trail-Trek Number 3," vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 235-249.

Coutant, Dr. C. G., History of Wyoming (and the Far West), vols. 1 and 2, University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, by Argonaut Press, Ltd., New York 1966 (first published 1899).

Larson, T. A., History of Wyoming, 1965, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Moody, Ralph, Stagecoach West, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1967.

Root, Frank A., The Overland Stage to California, 1901, W. Y. Morgan, Topeka.

Trevor, Marjorie, History of Carter-Sweetwater County, Wyoming, Master's Thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie.

Prepared by John Hnedak
Project Historian
National Park Service
Summer 1974

and Candace Reed
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
January 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Point of Rocks Stage Station Stable is typical of the small stage stations built during the late nineteenth century along the Overland Trail.
2. Condition of fabric: Ruinous condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular, 30'-6" x 55'-6" (1 bay); 1 story.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Light tan rough native sandstone laid with quarried gray sandstone at corners.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing stone walls; probably had log roof beams and wooden pole columns at the center.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: No doorways or doors exist; there is evidence, however, of a large door at each end of the stable, not large enough to admit a wagon or stage coach.
 - b. Windows and shutters: No windows existing. There is evidence of wide opening similar to that in the station house. Evidence suggests strongly that there were probably portholes in the north wall.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: No roof is in existence; probably a gable roof similar to that on the station house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: A large doorway in the west end opens into a small room, probably used as a storeroom. The large area east of the storeroom was the stable. It probably had stalls in it.
2. Flooring: Compacted earth.

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3. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls that are standing are native rough sandstone; the ceiling was probably rough sawn boards.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The stable sits on a rise to the south of the station and at right angles to it. There are rock formations to the south of the stable. The Overland Stage Line Trail ran between the stable and the station. Greasewood brush and prairie grass surround the stable.
2. Outbuildings: A few hundred yards to the west, on a slight rise, is a cemetery with one small fenced enclosure remaining.

Prepared by John P. White
Project Supervisor
National Park Service
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the State of Wyoming through the Wyoming Recreation Commission and was financed with funds provided by the Wyoming State Legislature. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Professor, Texas Tech University), John D. Hnedak, Project Historian (Cornell University). Student Assistant Architects who prepared the measured drawings for the project were Thomas L. Amis, Jr. (University of Texas, Austin), Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University), John T. Reddick (Yale University), and Paul S. Wheeler (University of Idaho). Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.

ADDENDUM to
Point of Rocks Stage Station, Stable
Rock Springs Vicinity
Point of Rocks
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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